

# BRISTOL AND THE WARS OF THE ROSES, 1451-1471



PETER FLEMING

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Dr Peter Fleming is a Principal Lecturer in History at the University of the West of England, where he is Co-Director of the Regional History Centre. He is currently researching the social, cultural and political history of late medieval Bristol.

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*Cover illustration:* A fifteenth-century esquire and his wife: Robert (d 1443) and Joan Grendour, Newland Church (from *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*)

## BRISTOL AND THE WARS OF THE ROSES, 1451-1471

### **The Last Years of Lancastrian Rule: 1451-1459**

In May 1451 Thomas Yonge, one of Bristol's two MPs, presented a bill before parliament which called for the formal recognition of Richard, duke of York, as the heir presumptive to the childless King Henry VI. For this, Yonge was thrown into the Tower. Understanding why Yonge did this, and why his action was so controversial, will also help to understand the background both to the outbreak, a few years later, of the civil wars between the royal houses of Lancaster and York, and Bristol's involvement in them.<sup>1</sup>

The previous two years had been disastrous for the Lancastrian monarchy. The renewal of the Hundred Years' War in 1449 had quickly resulted in the English loss of Normandy, which had been conquered by the king's renowned father, Henry V, thirty years earlier. Early in 1450, two of Henry VI's chief ministers, Bishop Moleyns and the duke of Suffolk, were murdered, the latter, at least, blamed for the disasters abroad. In the summer the south of England was engulfed by Cade's rebellion, and the government had temporarily to abandon London to the rebels, who executed another minister, Lord Saye and Sele. Only with great difficulty was the rebellion suppressed, and lesser uprisings continued until 1454. Among the demands of the Cade rebels was that Richard duke of York should be given a place at the head of Henry's council table. All this time, York had been in Ireland as the king's lieutenant. In September he returned to England, unbidden, and made a leisurely progress towards London, where the following month he arrived in time for the opening of the same Parliament in which Yonge would make his mark.

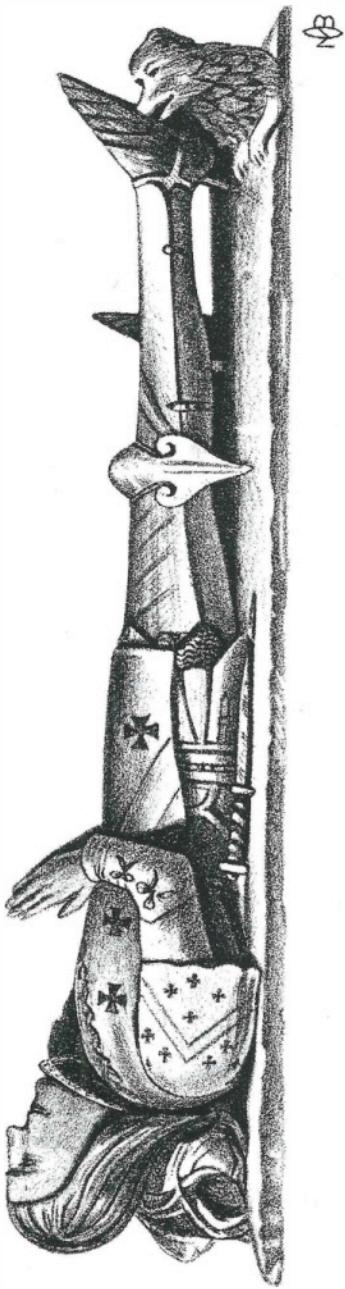
York's reappearance in England threatened the position of Henry's favourites, the Beauforts, led by Edmund, duke of Somerset. They were descended from an illegitimate son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, great-grandfather of Henry VI; by act of parliament, they were debarred from inheriting the throne, but acts of parliament can be unmade. York feared that this might happen, thereby preventing him, or his heirs, from ascending the throne in the event of Henry dying childless. John, duke

of Lancaster was the third son of Edward III; York's grandfather, Edmund, duke of York, was King Edward's fourth son, but his mother, Anne, was descended, through another female, from the second son, Lionel, duke of Clarence. Edward's grandson, and heir to his throne, was Richard II, who died childless. John of Gaunt's son pre-empted any debate over Richard's rightful heir by usurping the throne as Henry IV in 1399, and the following year ordering Richard's murder. York did not press his problematic claim to the throne until much later, but in 1451 he did begin to press for recognition as Henry's closest male relative, and for the full measure of influence that this would bring. Not surprisingly, the Beaufort faction bitterly resisted this, and it was through their influence with the king that Yonge found himself in the Tower.

Yonge is unlikely to have presented his bill solely on his own initiative; the duke of York and Bristol's mayor and common council probably knew in advance and approved.<sup>2</sup> He must have known the risks. This was his ninth parliament. He was an experienced lawyer and administrator; by 1451 he had been recorder of Bristol, and deputy chief steward of the southern Duchy of Lancaster estates, for around nine years. Yonge's father and namesake had been mayor of Bristol three times before his death in 1427. Not surprisingly, Thomas junior was York's man: steward of the duke's manor of Easton-in-Gordano since 1447, and one of his attorneys during his absence in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Yonge's colleague in the 1450/1 parliament was his half-brother, William Canynges, son of an equally prominent Bristol family. He too was part of York's west-country circle.<sup>4</sup> They were probably not the sole 'Yorkists' among the Bristol elite at this time.

Bristol's wealth, strategic position, and relative proximity to London made it a potentially important feature in the political geography of fifteenth-century England. A number of key political players held substantial estates in its vicinity. The duke of York held manors in Wiltshire and Somerset, as did the Lancastrian die-hard, James Butler, earl of Wiltshire. Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, held extensive estates in Gloucestershire as well as the manorial court of the Honour of Gloucester, the Earlscourt, held at St James's Priory in Bristol, which brought an interest in the manor and hundred of the Barton, which covered a large area - broadly equating to Stapleton, Mangotsfield and Kingswood - to the immediate east and north of the town. There was also a strong, and persistent, Beaufort connection in the south-western counties. In the lower rungs of the baronage, the Berkeleys were the most important regional nobility, with considerable influence in Bristol affairs.<sup>5</sup>

In March 1452 York led an armed demonstration to Dartford (Kent), as part of his campaign to be recognised as heir to the throne. This was



*James, 11th Lord Berkeley, d. 1463. On a high tomb in a chapel on the south side of the high altar, Berkeley Church. A smaller effigy of his second son, James, lies on his left side. (From *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*)*

a humiliating failure, and York was effectively put under house arrest afterwards. Leading up to this attempt the duke circulated a number of towns with letters setting forth his case. One such was received by Bristol. This is no longer extant, but it probably ran along similar lines to that sent to Shrewsbury. This letter criticised the duke of Somerset for losses in France, and for allowing Calais to be imperilled, resulting in, 'derogation, loss of merchandise, [and] lesion of honour'. Such a message would certainly have struck a chord with Bristol merchants. While the full effects of the loss of France had yet to be felt, the situation by early 1452 was already bad enough, with the level of wine imports at less than half of its high point a decade earlier, and cloth exports also showing an alarming decline.<sup>6</sup>

Another opportunity fell into York's lap with Henry VI's mental collapse of August 1453. In the political vacuum that resulted, York was able to take over government as Protector in March 1454. What probably pushed Henry over the edge was news of the calamitous English defeat at Castillon, which left only Calais in English hands, but a different explanation was aired before the court of King's Bench in May 1454, when a Southwark yeoman, John Owden, alias Chamber, convicted of felony, turned royal approver, or informer, in an effort to escape the noose.<sup>7</sup> He claimed that Henry's descent into madness was the result of spells worked by five Bristol merchants, using books of necromancy and sorcery, on and after 12 July 1453. These were prominent men; William Talbot, John Ford, Nicholas Stone and William Rolf had all been bailiffs, and Ford had been sheriff in 1444/5; only William Barbour among the supposed necromancers had not held civic office. Owden also claimed that two other Bristol merchants, Richard Ward and John Shipward, were involved in customs fraud, and that four others - Nicholas Hill, Thomas Ball, William Damme and Clement Bagot, were plotting treason with the French. Again, this was an illustrious group; Ball had been sheriff, as Damme would later be, while Shipward, Hill and Bagot had been both sheriffs and mayors. Owden was evidently executed after those accused began to exonerate themselves before the court, but the accusations do raise interesting questions. Nearly all of those accused can be identified as prominent Bristol merchants, many of them civic office-holders. The accusation of customs fraud is the more plausible of the three, but neither politically-inspired necromancy nor profit-motivated collusion with the enemy were unknown, so Owden's claims should not necessarily be dismissed out of hand. How was this Southwark yeoman able to name accurately so many Bristolians? Probably he had been supplied with this information by someone better-connected, and it has been suggested that this was a put-up job to embarrass York during his

protectorate; this is highly probable, but it is surely significant that Bristol was chosen as the location for this supposed plot, assuming that there was, in fact, no substance to it, since it only becomes embarrassing to York if Bristol was a town known to be ‘Yorkist’.

There seems to have been enthusiastic support for the Protectorate among Bristol’s elite. In July 1454, it was reported that ‘a stately vessel, only for the war, is made new at Bristol by the Mayor, called Sturmy [Robert Sturmy]. And the said town with the west coasts will do their part, if they may be supported or favoured.’<sup>8</sup> Mayor Sturmy’s initiative came after Bristol had already been called upon to raise a force of archers and a loan of £150 towards the transport of an army to Calais.<sup>9</sup>

On 22 May 1455 York and his new ally, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, defeated a small Lancastrian army at St Albans, and seized the king, who suffered another mental collapse. In November, York was appointed protector once again, a position he would hold until February, when Henry made a partial recovery. In 1456 there was a Lancastrian resurgence under Henry’s doughty queen, Margaret of Anjou, and in August the court moved to Coventry, away from Yorkist influence. According to a later town chronicle, Margaret came to Bristol in 1457; it was probably not an entirely social - or sociable - visit.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Yorkist Triumph, 1459-1461**

Despite Henry’s efforts to bring peace, divisions grew ever more bitter from 1457 to 1459. In October 1459 York, with his allies Warwick and Warwick’s father, Richard, earl of Salisbury, attempted to force the Queen’s hand with an armed demonstration at Ludford, near Ludlow in the Shropshire marches. The result was a rout of the Yorkist forces, and their leaders fled into exile: York to Ireland, the Nevilles and York’s son Edward, earl of March, the future Edward IV, to Calais, where Warwick was captain. From here Warwick mounted swashbuckling naval operations against his enemies. In March 1460 he sailed to Dublin to plan an invasion; this came in June with the Nevilles’ landing in Kent followed by the swift capitulation of London. The Yorkists’ victory at Northampton the following month won them custody of the king. He was now a puppet through whom the Nevilles hoped to rule the kingdom, but York had other ideas. He delayed his return to England until September, and the next month, to the evident surprise of his allies, he claimed the throne. An agreement was reached whereby Henry would be allowed to remain as king but after his death York, or his heir, would ascend the throne. The problem was that Henry had by now fathered a son, Edward, prince of Wales, and his mother had no intention of allowing him to be disinherited. Margaret, in exile in Scotland, ordered her scattered followers

to rendezvous at Hull, from where, she hoped, they would inflict a decisive blow against the Yorkists. Salisbury and York went north and at Wakefield, on 30 December, they were defeated and killed. Margaret hurried south with her army, and defeated Warwick at the second battle of St Albans on 17 February, from which the earl escaped with his life but little honour. Meanwhile, however, Edward earl of March, now duke of York, had defeated a Lancastrian force at Mortimers Cross, in the Welsh marches, and was heading for London. He and Warwick reached London to find that Margaret had turned north, having thought twice about trying to take the city - now committed to the Yorkist cause - by force. Here, on 4 March, York was proclaimed King Edward IV. Immediately he raised a fresh army and marched north to meet the Lancastrians, whom he decisively defeated at Towton on 29 March, thereby securing his throne.

Given Bristol's strategic position, at the nexus of routes from Ireland, Wales, the south west and the west midlands, it would be surprising if the Yorkists had not made efforts to cultivate their links with the town in the period leading up to Edward's usurpation. This was particularly the case after the rout at Ludford in October 1459. With the Lancastrian court based in Coventry, York in exile in Ireland and Warwick ensconced at Calais, Bristol controlled two possible approaches to London: York's from a landing in south Wales (and Bristol itself might even have given York a suitable bridgehead), and the route from a landing in the south west, which could conceivably have been made by either duke or earl. In addition, Bristol might have provided a base from which communications between Coventry and London could be threatened. That the Yorkists recognised Bristol's strategic importance is demonstrated by the appointment of Edward earl of March as its castle constable on 14 November 1460, less than a month after his father's public declaration of his claim to the throne.<sup>11</sup>

There are indications that Bristolians gave assistance to the Yorkist cause in the crucial months between the rout at Ludford and Edward's proclamation as king. Shortly before February 1460 Thomas Yonge was accused of treason by a priest, John Boswell, and consequently spent a second spell in the Tower. He was released on bail in March, but it was not until 25 November that charges were dropped, by which time the Yorkists had control of the machinery of government and the central courts of law.<sup>12</sup> Yonge had been granted a pardon on 12 November, and this would have helped procure his discharge thirteen days later.<sup>13</sup> His alleged treason may well have taken the form of communication with the duke of York, in exile in Ireland following the rout of Ludford. As a result of any such activities, Yonge's future safety may have become inextricably linked to the success or failure of the Yorkist enterprise.

During his trip to Ireland in March 1460, Warwick's fleet captured two ships sailing out of Bristol, the *Julian* of Fowey and the *Mary* of Bristol. The *Julian* at least was kept in Ireland in Yorkist service for six months.<sup>14</sup> In July preparations began for York's return from Ireland. Two ships tied up in Bristol harbour, the *Marie* of Bayonne and the *Marie* of la Rochelle, were seized to form part of the fleet that would convey him; this would also include the *Julian* of Fowey.<sup>15</sup> The masters of the two French ships petitioned Chancery, and claimed that they had held letters of safe conduct 'promised by the king's kinsman, Richard earl of Warwick', when, on 22 July, John, Lord Clinton (one of the Yorkists who had fled the rout at Ludford) and many others, 'sent by favour of Thomas Roger, late mayor, Robert Jakes, then sheriff, and other burgesses' of Bristol took the ships for service in the duke of York's fleet, promising to return them to England when no longer required. However, despite their faithful service to the duke, the masters were unable to recover their ships, 'because certain enemies plotting to injure them assert that they resisted John de Clinton and the king's other lieges in taking the ships and fired cannons at them, killing one of them, and called them traitors and other ignominious names, of which they affirm that neither they nor any of their company are guilty'. While it may have carried the implication that the letters of safe conduct and Warwick's promise had been ignored, the masters' petition presents them as faithful servants of York, into whose service they willingly delivered up their ships. The seizure, according to this testimony, was orchestrated by the mayor and common council. The commission of enquiry into this complaint was issued on Christmas Eve 1460, six days before York's defeat and death at Wakefield.

The commission was addressed to Mayor William Canynges, Richard Choke, a prominent local sergeant-at-law, Thomas Yonge, Richard Alberton and the sheriff and bailiffs of Bristol. The inquisition was held on 23 January 1461. In the month between the commission and the inquest the battle of Wakefield had put the Lancastrians temporarily in the ascendant. As the inquest met, Margaret of Anjou's army was marching south, on its way to St Albans. In this light, the commission's findings read like an attempt to clear the town authorities from any hint of collaboration with the Yorkists. Lord Clinton and his force were described as 'evildoers and disturbers of the peace'; his men were a motley bunch of Irish sailors and others from Norfolk, Devon, Somerset, Wales and Calais (reflecting the recent refuges and peregrinations of the Yorkist lords) but with no Bristolians among them. The commissioners were keen to refute claims that Clinton had been acting with the encouragement of the civic authorities; he and his men acted, 'by their

own assault and wrong and not by the favour of the said mayor and sheriff or of the burgesses or anybody sent by them', and nor did the ships' masters or their crews resist or open fire on their assailants, 'as is alleged on behalf of John [Lord Clinton] and the other evildoers'. Perhaps Canynges, Yonge and their associates were keen to downplay the scale of the incident in order to avoid further, possibly embarrassing, investigations. In any case, they were clearly hedging their bets as the Yorkists' fate hung in the balance.

In October 1460 the Lancastrian duke of Somerset landed in the South West, and joined with the earl of Devon to raise troops for the rendezvous at Hull. They started north in December, passing through Bath, Cirencester, Evesham and thence to Coventry. Significantly, perhaps, their route by-passed Bristol, the obvious gateway to the Severn Valley route to Evesham and the West Midlands.<sup>16</sup> They may have been deterred by a show of strength and a discharge of cannon from Bristol castle. An undated memorandum in Bristol's *Great Red Book* records how the duke of York commissioned the mayor and common council to 'take upon them the rule governance and defence of the king's castle of Bristol against the purposed malice of the Duke of Somerset who intends ... to have entry and rule of the said castle'; to this end four hundredweight of gunpowder, saltpetre and sulphur were expended by the town authorities, who seem to have taken over the castle and held it in the duke's name.<sup>17</sup> According to the same document the gunpowder, saltpetre and sulphur had been part of a consignment of two thousand pounds of such material in eleven barrels sent by John Judde, master of the king's ordnance, to Henry May, a Bristol merchant of Irish origins.<sup>18</sup> In December 1459 Judde had been ordered to seize all war materials held by York, Warwick and Salisbury or their allies, and to ensure that all of the king's ordnance was in good order.<sup>19</sup> In the same month, and again in February 1460, Bristol was among those places ordered to raise men to resist the Yorkists.<sup>20</sup> Judde's despatch of the gunpowder must have been made before his murder in May 1460.<sup>21</sup> The Bristol memorandum goes on to relate how Mayor William Canynges, 'understanding well and knowing for certain the said Harry May to be of like disposition and assistant to James then being earl of Wiltshire', and by advice of the common council, seized these eleven barrels.<sup>22</sup> That May was indeed an accomplice of Wiltshire is confirmed by a Chancery suit brought between May 1461 and June 1467 by Richard Hawker, the earl of Warwick's bailiff of Tewkesbury, in which he told how he had seized fifty-nine quarters of wheat which May had bought for Wiltshire's use.<sup>23</sup> James Butler, or Ormond, earl of Wiltshire, came of a major Anglo-Irish family, and so it is quite possible that Ireland provides the

link between himself and May.<sup>24</sup> May's loss of the gunpowder and wheat probably occurred in the Winter of 1460. Wiltshire's actual movements during this time are obscure, but he may have accompanied Somerset on his march through the West Country with the earl of Devon, in the last months of 1460. If so, then May's foiled attempts to supply Wiltshire's forces would most likely have taken place as the Lancastrian army passed close to Bristol. Somerset was once more a threatening presence in the Bristol region soon after Edward IV's accession, when the new king repeated his father's command to the mayor and common council to hold the castle against the duke.<sup>25</sup>

There are other hints of Bristol's generally pro-Yorkist stance during this period. In July 1462 John Browne of Bristol was granted the office of customer of Cork, Youghal and Kinsale for life, in view of his good service to Edward and his father, the duke of York.<sup>26</sup> According to one chronicler, after the second battle of St Albans in February 1461, 'the Queen with her council had granted and given leave to the northern men to spoil and rob ... the towns of Coventry, Bristol, and Salisbury with the shires within rehearsed, as for payment and recompense of their fees and wages, as the common noise was among the people at that time ...'.<sup>27</sup> That the chronicler, writing soon after 1461, should have described Margaret as choosing these three towns for punishment suggests that they were regarded as having had particular Yorkist associations.

Bristol's support continued into the early months of the new reign. The town provided men and ships for the Yorkist war effort. Edward was recruiting in the area in February 1461 and Bristol supplied sixty men at a cost of £160. These, or another Bristol contingent, were probably present at Towton on 29 March.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Bristol sent two fleets to support the campaign against the Lancastrian Jasper Tudor in Wales; the first of these, assembled in September 1461, cost the town over £300; with both was sent more of Henry May's confiscated gunpowder.<sup>29</sup>

Bristol also supplied money. In July 1461 Thomas Yonge made two loans to the Crown, one of £150, the other of £116 13s 4d; he had also evidently lent £66 13s 4d at some point before Christmas of that year. In August 1461 William Canynges lent £333 6s 8d, and around the same time the abbey of St Augustine's lent a little over £23.<sup>30</sup> Yonge and Canynges's loans were the biggest made by individuals outside of London or Calais for the whole period from 1452 to 1462; if these were personal loans, then they demonstrate an individual commitment by these two individuals to the House of York which is unparalleled among provincial townsmen; if they were acting as representatives of a syndicate, then this would seem to confirm the Yorkist affiliation of a broad swathe of Bristol's governing class.<sup>31</sup> In 1463 the common council

would claim that it had lent the king £200, ‘at his desire’, and at that date still not repaid. This would seem to have been quite separate from the loans by Canynges and Yonge.<sup>32</sup> While such sums pale into insignificance against the loans made by London to the Yorkists, and which were made fully a year earlier than Bristol’s, they may not tell the whole story, since the Exchequer records do not record those loans made informally, which probably came to a significant amount.<sup>33</sup>

While Bristol’s governing elite may have been Yorkist sympathisers, or at least dominated by a pro-Yorkist faction, Lancastrian support within the town was not restricted to the disaffected Henry May. John Borough, or Burgh, yeoman of the crown and customs officer in the port of Bristol in 1456/7, would be rewarded in January 1460 for his good service against the rebellious Yorkists.<sup>34</sup> According to allegations made at his trial in September 1461, Sir Baldwin Fulford, the former sheriff of Devon, was active in Bristol from the previous December, drawing at least four yeomen into his plots against first the duke of York and then, in March 1461, Edward IV.<sup>35</sup> These charges also alluded to a further Lancastrian conspiracy within the town in July, led by John Heysaunt. Heysaunt and Sir Baldwin Fulford were tried during Edward IV’s visit to Bristol from 4 to 8 September.<sup>36</sup> They were executed on the town gallows on St Michael’s Hill. Fulford’s head was set upon Exeter Guildhall.<sup>37</sup> Heysaunt’s head was to be placed on Bristol’s Newgate Gaol, in full view of the entire population of the town, to strike terror into the hearts of all those delinquents tempted to resist the new king. Heysaunt had been one of Bristol’s customs collectors, holding office from February 1457 until some point between March and December 1460.<sup>38</sup>

However, these incidents do not undermine the impression that Bristol’s mercantile elite were overwhelmingly Yorkist, or at least unwilling to stick their necks out in the Lancastrian cause. Their lack of enthusiasm for Henry VI probably resulted mainly from commercial grievances, mingled with injured national pride. During the latter half of the 1450s Warwick had been cutting a dash in the channel. As captain of Calais and keeper of the seas his ships had inflicted serious damage on the French; that other nations’ ships, neutral or allies, had also suffered at his hands, does not seem to have lessened the adulation which his exploits earned him from England’s merchants.<sup>39</sup> Contemporaries did not regard his exploits as exacerbating the threat of piracy in the Channel, but as - at long last - dealing with it. Bristolians were frequently reminded of the problem. Several times in the 1450s Bristol merchants were appointed to commissions investigating allegations of piratical attacks in the Bristol approaches, particularly off the coast of Cornwall. While Bristol ships were occasionally the victims,

more often the target was foreign shipping - which still caused disruption to Bristol's trade - although Bristol captains were themselves not always above reproach.<sup>40</sup> One particularly flagrant violation occurred in February 1460, perpetrated upon Bristol shipping by the captain of a vessel owned by the Lancastrian loyalist Sir Hugh Courtenay of Boconnoc. This act was unlikely to have endeared Bristolians to the cause of Henry VI in the same month that they were being exhorted to supply money and men to aid Sir Baldwin Fulford's efforts to destroy Warwick and the other Yorkists.<sup>41</sup> The claims of Yorkist propaganda that they would restore good governance could plausibly have been interpreted by mercantile communities as covering the keeping of the seas.<sup>42</sup>

Increased disorder in the Channel was but one symptom of the general collapse of Lancastrian authority beyond English shores in the 1450s. Bristol ships, men and money played their part in attempts to shore up the doomed war effort between 1449 and 1453. The loss of Gascony in the latter year had a serious impact. Bristol's overseas trade, dominated by imports of Gascon wine and exports of cloth, slumped. The story told by the customs accounts, though doubtless incomplete, is nonetheless compelling. From a high point of 3075 tuns in 1440-1, wine imports dropped to a low of 274 tuns in 1460-1; cloth exports followed a similar pattern, with a high of 7546 broadcloths exported in 1447-8 dropping to a mere 1214 in 1460-1.<sup>43</sup> That Mayor Canynges presided over the worst year for Bristol's trade anyone could remember, and that this was the consequence of Lancastrian military failure, could only have helped in swinging his town behind York.

In the late 1450s the very regime that might, with some justification, have been blamed for inflicting such damage on Bristol's economy, was at the same time intensifying its demands for money. On 2 August 1458 John Wyche, merchant of Bristol, entered into an agreement with the king that each quarter, for as long as he occupied his post of searcher of the customs, he would deliver to the Crown £66 13s 4d more than had been forthcoming in any quarter within the previous two years, provided that the merchant fleet came home safely; he anticipated that this increase could be realised through more rigorous forfeitures of smuggled goods. In return, he would be allowed to retain half the value of the forfeitures.<sup>44</sup> Given that Bristol's customs receipts were in decline, with no prospect of recovery, Wyche could only make good his promise by more rigorous searches, thereby diminishing the profits of smuggling, or by making false claims to forfeitures. Even the former stratagem would have antagonised a sizeable proportion of Bristol's merchants, if the levels of smuggling were anything like those under the Tudors.<sup>45</sup> Wyche was already on bad terms with his fellow searcher, Thomas Talbot

esquire; on 7 July 1458 Talbot obtained a writ from Chancery directed to the sheriff by which he was to order Wyche and two of his associates to find sureties for their good behaviour towards Talbot. Wyche refused to comply and so on 11 August was imprisoned in Newgate for thirty days, a circumstance which must at the very least have delayed his proposed crackdown in the port of Bristol.<sup>46</sup> The Wyche-Talbot vendetta continued. At some point after September 1458 Mayor Philip Mede attempted to apprehend Talbot, ‘for beating of John Wyche, Searcher, but he withstood the Mayor, and escaped out of Temple Gate’.<sup>47</sup>

There was friction between Bristol and Queen Margaret in the later 1450s. In March 1459 the Exchequer received payments of 20s each from ten Bristol merchants. This money appears to have been related to the non-payment of part of the sum of £102 15s 6d from the Bristol fee farm, which was regularly granted as part of the queen’s dower.<sup>48</sup> Irritation over the Crown’s financial demands could not have been a sufficient cause of the Bristol elite’s shift towards the Yorkist camp, but it may have contributed towards a growing disenchantment with Henry VI’s government, compounded also of the town’s existing links with York and Warwick, its worsening economic prospects resulting, in part, from Lancastrian military failure, and the general popularity of Warwick’s naval activities.

### **Edward IV in Control, 1461-1469**

*The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar* records Edward’s visit to the town in September 1461 with evident civic pride:

This noble prince king Edward the fourth in the first year of his reign came first to Bristol, where he was full honourably received in as worshipful wise as ever he was in any town or city.<sup>49</sup>

Bristol’s support did not go unrewarded. Four royal charters were granted or confirmed between October 1461 and August 1462. The first of these was largely a reissue of the 1446 charter granting the port of Bristol exemption from admiralty jurisdiction, but care was taken to ensure its effectiveness.<sup>50</sup> In December 1462 Edward confirmed a number of charters, including those of 1373 and the charter of 1396 which granted exemption from purveyance by the royal household.<sup>51</sup> At the same time a charter was issued that granted additional liberties relating to the holding of courts, the regulation of the sale of wool and woollen cloth, the provision of an annual fair, and additional customs to fund the repair of the quays. The preamble is unusually effusive, describing the burgesses’ ‘laudable services’, while for their ‘late services done at their

own expense, cost, labour, charges and risk, not a little to their merit' the king, it declares, wishes to 'exert himself' for their benefit.<sup>52</sup> Such sentiments seem rather more heart-felt than most charter preambles, perhaps suggesting Edward's genuine gratitude for the important part Bristol had played in his success. Most important of the four was the last, given in August 1462. This granted the right to collect the fee farm of the town to the mayor and common council in perpetuity, in return for annual payments of £102 15s 6d to the Exchequer, and other payments to St James's priory, Tewkesbury abbey, and to the officers of Kingswood and Bristol castle. The right to collect the fee farm had been granted by Henry VI for twenty years in 1439 and for a further sixty years after the end of that period in 1445; this was now made permanent.<sup>53</sup> The confirmation and amplification of civic liberties was recounted in celebratory tones in *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*:

This year [1461-3] ... Philip Mede mayor, by assent of all the Council of Bristol, was sent to the King's good grace for the confirmation of the franchises and privileges of the said Town, which Mayor sped full well with the king's good grace, confirming and ratifying all the liberties of the said Town, with new special additions for the honour and common weal of the same.<sup>54</sup>

In the closing months of 1461 Bristol merchants received sixteen licences to trade with Iceland from a grateful king. Edward is traditionally supposed to have stayed in William Canynges's great house in Redcliffe during his visit to Bristol in September 1461. Canynges, together with John Shipward, John Gaywode and Robert Baron of Bristol went on to act as royal agents, purchasing silks and other luxuries from a merchant of Luca; in December 1465 they were licensed to trade free of subsidy until they had recouped the sum of £322 18s which they had spent on these commodities for the king's wardrobe.<sup>55</sup> Thomas Yonge also benefited from the new regime, becoming a serjeant-at-law and king's serjeant in 1463. He continued to be retained by the duchy of Lancaster. At some point after Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in May 1464 he became a member of the queen's council, and in 1467 he was appointed justice of common pleas.<sup>56</sup> There were also the spoils of war to be distributed; in July 1461 Bristol was among those towns assigned a share of the proceeds from the earl of Wiltshire's forfeited estates in lieu of money owed by Genoese merchants.<sup>57</sup>

Despite initially hostile Anglo-French trading relations after 1461, commercial prospects soon improved. In 1463 Louis XI eased restrictions on Gascon commerce with the English.<sup>58</sup> There followed a dramatic

increase in Bristol's overseas trade, with the average annual tunnage of wine standing at 1237.5 for the two years from Michaelmas 1464 to Michaelmas 1466, and the average number of broadcloths exported rising to 3234.5 in the same period.<sup>59</sup> In all probability, a lesser proportion of this merchandise was falling prey to pirates; more effective naval patrols, and a more focused and determined royal policy, soon had their effect.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, by the beginning of this upturn in trade, the 'honeymoon' period, if such it had been, was already coming to an end. Parliament's grant of a tax of a fifteenth and tenth in June 1463 led to nationwide resentment.<sup>61</sup> In Bristol, it moved the mayor and common council to petition the earl of Warwick to approach the king on their behalf for remission of the tax, in light of their town's contribution to his victory and its current destitution, caused in part by the depression in the cloth trade.<sup>62</sup> Whether as a reaction to the economic situation, or an expression of lingering Lancastrianism, or a combination of both, there was serious disorder in Bristol and its vicinity in late 1463.<sup>63</sup>

Friction between Bristol and the Exchequer over the payment of the fee farm continued into the new reign, despite Edward's charter confirming this to the town in perpetuity. The dispute rumbled on until at least 1468.<sup>64</sup> There was also a disagreement over the payment of Elizabeth Woodville's annuity of £102 15s 6d. This had been allocated as part of the queen's dower in the previous reign, but before Elizabeth's public acknowledgement as queen in 1465 this had been assigned to pay debts which Edward owed to a London jeweller. Alternative arrangements for his payment were not made when the annuity was re-assigned to Elizabeth in March, and Thomas Yonge became embroiled in the ensuing attempts to reach a settlement.<sup>65</sup>

However, such disagreements and misunderstandings were not the sort of issues to turn loyalists into traitors. We need to look elsewhere to explain why, within a decade of Edward's accession, a significant proportion of Bristol's elite were implicated in Lancastrian resurgence and the short-lived re-establishment - or Reademption - of Henry VI. Bristol merchants may well have shared a widespread disenchantment with a king who had, perhaps, promised more than he could deliver, but there might have been more particular factors at work in alienating them from the Yorkist monarchy. One is trade, or rather, the conditions for trade created by Edward's dynastic and diplomatic policy. Given the south-western orientation of much of Bristol's continental commerce, good relations with France would have been of particular importance. Good relations with the Burgundian Netherlands, on the other hand, are likely to have been of minor commercial significance. Indeed, the imposition of a Burgundian embargo on English cloth in October 1464 coincided with a considerable expansion in Bristol's cloth exports.<sup>66</sup>

Bristol merchants would therefore have been very happy with the free fairs and reduced tolls and restrictions for English merchants offered by Louis XI to Warwick's embassy in June 1467. Unfortunately for them, Edward's sights were turned northwards, and it was with Burgundy that he signed a commercial treaty five months later. This treaty, and the marriage alliance between Edward's sister Margaret and the duke of Burgundy, were evidently unpopular, even in London, which enjoyed a healthy trade with the Netherlands; for Bristolians, who might well have seen the Burgundians as competitors rather than trading partners, it was probably greeted with dismay.<sup>67</sup> The association of this alliance with the queen, daughter of Jacquetta, duchess of Luxemburg, could have done nothing to placate those who resented Elizabeth Woodville's demands on the fee farm. Nor would they have been impressed by the grant of a tax of two fifteenths and tenths in May 1468 to finance an invasion of France, a heavy financial burden to support an enterprise that, had it come off, would have worked directly against Bristol's immediate commercial interests.<sup>68</sup>

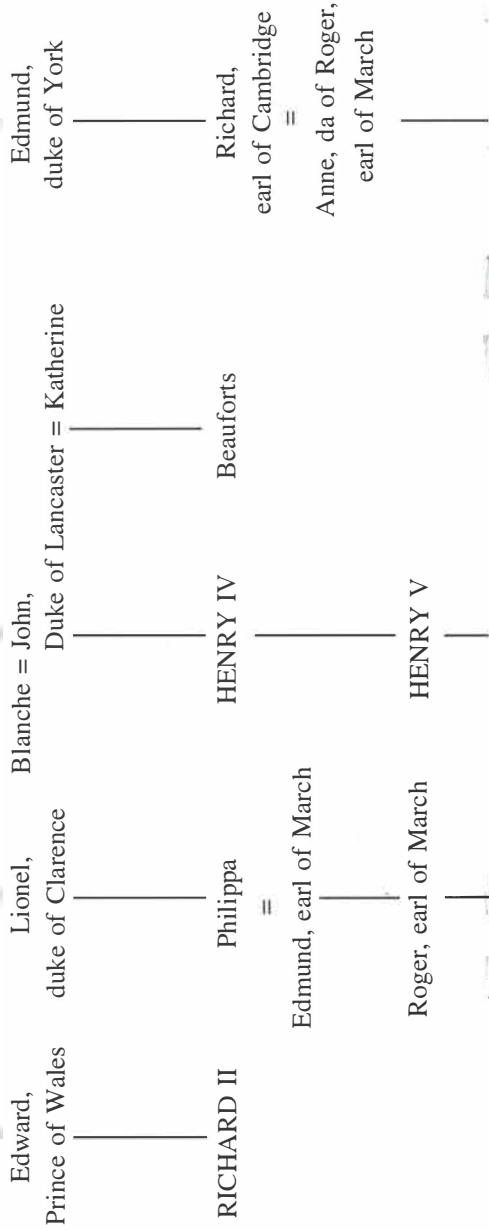
Warwick would have seemed a natural patron for those dismayed by Edward's foreign policy. As lord of the EarlsCourt and Barton, and with extensive lands and manors in Gloucestershire, he had a well-established local position. The memory of his exploits in the Channel was still fresh. He was championing the pro-French policy that would have been favourable to Bristol's trade. As we have seen, it was to him that Bristol appealed for relief from the taxation of 1463. He was also cultivating individuals from the area.<sup>69</sup> In addition, George duke of Clarence, Warwick's future partner in rebellion, may already have had a local presence in the 1460s. In July 1466 he was appointed to a judicial commission of *oyer et terminer* for south-west and south-central England, where he was joined by the mayor of Bristol, Sir Richard Choke, William Spenser, and Thomas Yonge. In 1462 he had been appointed lieutenant of Ireland for seven years; while he exercised this through a deputy, it would still have brought him influence in Bristol's western hinterland.<sup>70</sup>

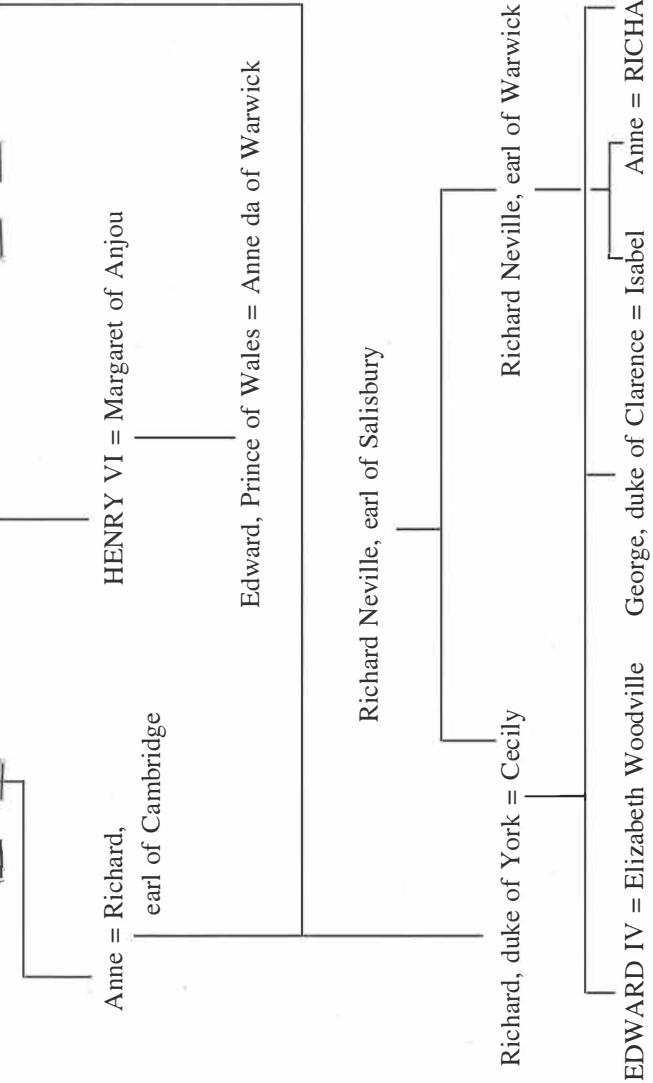
### **Warwick's Challenge, 1469-1470**

Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of a Lancastrian knight, brought her numerous kin into the royal family, and many of these had to be found suitably elevated husbands and wives. This severely restricted the scope of Warwick's plans for his own family. He may have resented the influence that the Woodvilles were now enjoying, feeling that he no longer had the king's ear. He may have been offended that such relatively lowly people were now his social and political equals. However, it was probably differences over foreign policy that

## LANCASTER AND YORK: THE DESCENDANTS OF EDWARD III

EDWARD III



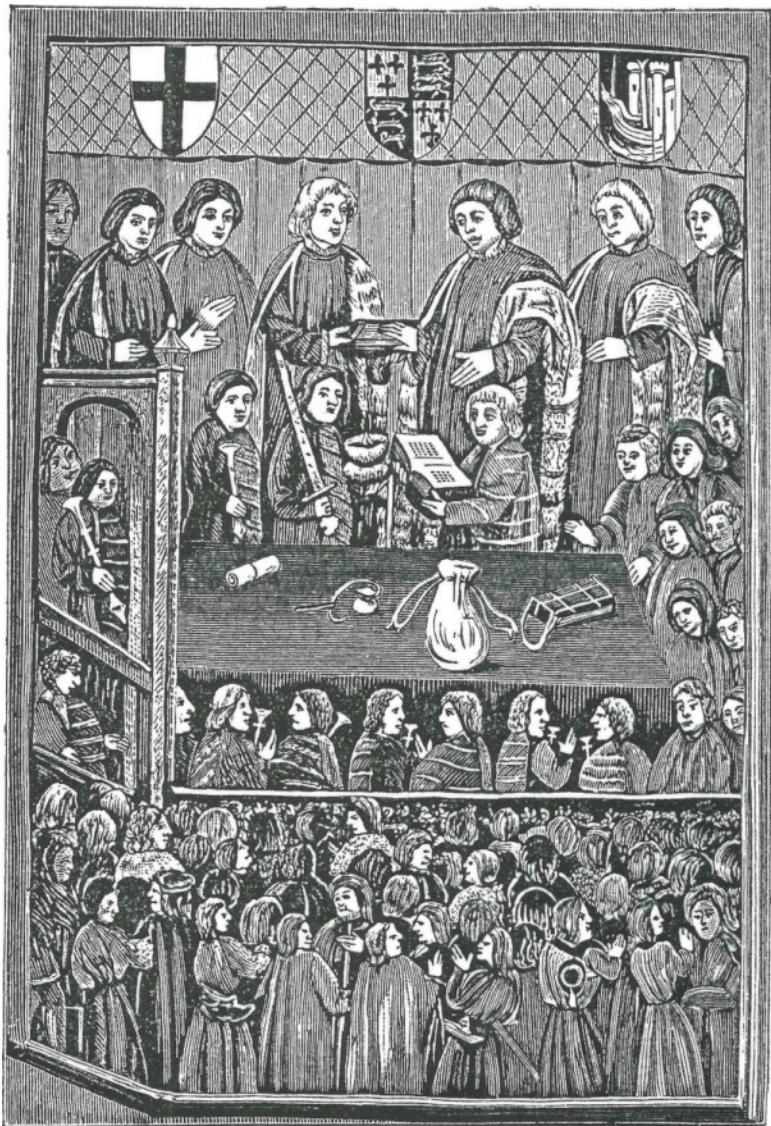


most enraged him; he had been pursuing a French alliance, but the Woodville marriage was swiftly followed by an alliance with the duke of Burgundy, the French king's bitter rival. Warwick felt that he had been made to look foolish on the international stage. He began plotting against the king he believed he had helped to make, and even managed to suborn Edward's own brother, George, duke of Clarence. The pair covertly encouraged rebellion in the north. Their plotting would eventually result, through a convoluted series of events, in the re-establishment of Henry VI in the Readeption of 1470/71.

In July 1469 Warwick's opposition to Edward was made brutally apparent at the battle of Edgecote, near Banbury, where his forces comprehensively defeated a largely Welsh army led by Edward's loyal lieutenants, William Herbert, earl of Pembroke and Humphrey Stafford, earl of Devon. This was a victory not only over Edward, but also Pembroke, who was captured. He and Warwick were personal enemies, and had long quarrelled over the contested lordship of South Wales. Immediately after the battle Pembroke and his brother Sir Richard Herbert were executed.

In the murderous purge of the Edwardian loyalists that followed, another Herbert was killed at Bristol within a month of the battle. Together with the execution of the earl of Devon in Bridgwater in August, the massacre of the Herberts effectively removed the uppermost layer of royal authority in the West Country. The executions at Bristol and Bridgwater were almost certainly carried out by order of Warwick.

There is some confusion over the identity of the man killed at Bristol. At least ten years later he was described by the Bristol chronicler and town clerk Robert Ricart as Pembroke's brother.<sup>71</sup> Another chronicler, John Warkworth, master of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, writing between 1478 and 1483 and apparently well-informed on Edgecote and its aftermath, identified him as Thomas.<sup>72</sup> William Worcestre, the Bristol-born antiquarian, writing at around the same time, and whom one might expect to be at least as well-informed on events in the town of his birth, was unsure; in his account of the aftermath of Edgecote he deleted his first identification of *Richard* in favour of *William* Herbert.<sup>73</sup> The problem of identification - shared by contemporary chroniclers and modern historians alike - is compounded by the size of the Herbert clan; both Pembroke and his father, Sir William ap Thomas, had many legitimate sons, and there were numerous bastards.<sup>74</sup> Accepting Ricart's statement that the Herbert in question was Pembroke's brother does not help, since among the earl's brothers was William (giving the same Christian name to two brothers was not a rare practice in medieval families), Sir Richard of Colebrook, and Thomas.



Picture in Ricart's 'Calendar', showing sword bearer with sword and cap and the sergeants in ray liveries. (From *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*)

A William Herbert was employed in the Bristol customs house; he was supervisor, or controller, of the scrutiny of the customs from 1462 to 1466. But this William Herbert appears to have survived the cull of his kindred; William Herbert, merchant of Bristol, was granted a licence to trade in October 1471.<sup>75</sup> Sir Richard Herbert of Colebrook had local interests: in 1464/5 he received the Gloucestershire manors of Lassington, and Netherleigh, in Westbury-on-Trym, forfeited by Sir John Scudamore; but Worcestre and Warkworth agree that he was killed at Edgecote.<sup>76</sup>

This leaves Thomas. The escheator, or royal financial official, for Gloucestershire and the Welsh March was informed of the death of Thomas Herbert esquire in October 1471; delays in issuing such notifications were not rare, and given the confusion that engulfed England between 1469 and 1471, this could have related to a Thomas Herbert slain after Edgecote. The Thomas Herbert esquire, late sheriff of Somerset and Dorset, is probably the same as the man whose death was notified to the escheator.<sup>77</sup> If this was the victim, then he would have been well-known to those who witnessed his execution. Thomas Herbert, esquire of the body to Edward IV and sheriff of Somerset and Dorset in 1461-2, was a key figure in the royal administration of the West Country; constable of Gloucester castle and a county JP and frequent commissioner, he was also MP for Gloucester in 1467-8. He had been commissioned along with Lord Herbert, future earl of Pembroke, to take ships in Bristol for the king's fleet in March 1462, and it was from Bristol that he sailed on an embassy to Castile later that year. In 1467 he was granted the wardship and marriage of Robert, son and heir of John Poyntz of Iron Acton. According to Rudder's *New History of Gloucestershire*, Thomas Herbert was granted the manors of Duntesbourn Rouse and Longney, forfeited by Thomas and William Mull in 1462/3, and died without male heirs, the manors being granted to Sir Richard Beauchamp in 1474/5.<sup>78</sup> A Thomas Herbert was a Bristol customs collector between 1466 and 1468, but this was probably the son or nephew (Pembroke's son) of his namesake the squire of the body.<sup>79</sup>

Thomas Herbert senior was the villain of an extraordinary tale told by Thomas Norton, a Bristol customs controller, esquire of Edward IV's household, and prominent alchemist, author of one of the most celebrated English alchemical works, *The Ordinall of Alchimy*.<sup>80</sup> According to Norton's account in the *Ordinall*, written in or after 1477, Herbert had abducted another alchemist, Thomas Dalton, from Tewkesbury Abbey and imprisoned him for four years in the hope that he would produce gold for him; eventually, Herbert decided to execute the alchemist, but Dalton's pious prayers moved him to order his release. According to

Norton, Dalton had been spotted by Herbert when he was presented before Edward IV by John Delves, whose clerk he had once been. Delves was another esquire of the household, and a member of Warwick's affinity; he was proclaimed a traitor in April 1471 and lost his head after Edward's victory at Tewkesbury the following month. The identification of Delves with Warwick's man raises the possibility of a factional sub-text to this story: that Herbert's mistreatment of Dalton may have been motivated by the hapless monk's political associations as well as his alchemical claims.<sup>81</sup> However, Norton also says that 'Herbert died soon after in his bed'.<sup>82</sup> Could Norton have confused Thomas the elder with his younger namesake? Whatever the truth behind this tale, it does indicate that Thomas Herbert was not always remembered with affection in Bristol. On balance, it seems safest to agree with Warkworth, and to identify Warwick's victim at Bristol in 1469 with Thomas, brother of William Herbert, earl of Pembroke.

Warwick's brief period of ascendancy ushered in by Edgecote may have had further repercussions in Bristol. On 25 August 1469, during the period of Warwick's rule, a commission was issued to Thomas Yonge, Philip Mede, the mayor, and Nicholas Hervey, who was now the recorder, to investigate the felonies, riots and other offences committed by two Bristol yeomen, John Swancote and Walter Holder.<sup>83</sup> Swancote had been a Bristol customs officer since November 1465, when he was appointed searcher, and since May 1469 he had been surveyor of the scrutiny.<sup>84</sup> In May 1466 he was appointed approver of the subsidy in Wiltshire, and one of his guarantors on this occasion was Walter Holder, the man named as his fellow miscreant in the 1469 commission.<sup>85</sup> What is significant about Swancote is that he was a trusted, and well-rewarded, servant of Edward IV. Within a year of the king's accession, in December 1461, he received a grant for life of lands in Shropshire, and these were exempted from the Act of Resumption of 1464.<sup>86</sup> In March 1465 he served on a commission to survey the lands lately held by the attainted earl of Wiltshire in Somerset, and in June 1468 he received a life grant of a portion of those lands, namely a moiety of the manor of Belton.<sup>87</sup> In addition, he had personal links with the Yorkist elite; in April 1469, described as a merchant of Bristol, he made a gift of all goods to a group that included Lord Hastings, Edward's right-hand man in the Midlands.<sup>88</sup> In November 1469, after Edward's recovery of power, Swancote's wife, Alice, described as a gentlewoman, secured a pardon for all offences and all consequent forfeitures of goods, which suggests that action had been taken against the couple, and in the following March he returned to the Bristol customs house, as gauger.<sup>89</sup> Under the Readeption regime, however, he was once again under a cloud; he seems

to have lost his post as gauger, and in February 1471 he thought it wise to purchase a pardon. With Edward's return, he was reappointed gauger.<sup>90</sup> In February of the following year he took out another pardon, and in December 1472, described as king's servant, he was granted the office of gauger for life.<sup>91</sup>

On 20 March 1470 William, Lord Berkeley, and Thomas Talbot, Viscount Lisle, clashed with their armies on Nibley Green in Gloucestershire, a few miles north of Bristol. Lisle was brought down in an arrow shower and stabbed to death, leaving Berkeley the victor in a private feud that had been under way since 1417.<sup>92</sup> While this was hardly a 'Wars of the Roses' battle, its leading participants were not unconnected with the dynastic struggle. Lisle was the son-in-law of the earl of Pembroke, and Berkeley would almost certainly be implicated in the Readeption regime. So, it would be significant if Bristol men had fought for Berkeley at Nibley Green. There are two reasons to think that they did. One of those who would later be implicated as a supporter of the Readeption was Bristol's mayor in 1470, John Shipward. In May he issued a judgement that, contrary to the rumours that were in circulation, his son and namesake, together with Philip Mede, father-in-law of Lord Berkley's brother Maurice, did not 'send certain persons forcibly arrayed in manner of war to the Lord Berkeley against the Lord Lisle'. That he felt it necessary to make such a declaration is itself suggestive of the opposite, and the Berkeleys' family chronicler, John Smyth, writing in the early seventeenth century, claimed to have seen other documents that proved Bristol to have sent a contingent to Nibley Green. While Smyth's incriminating evidence does not seem to have survived, there is corroboration of Bristol's involvement in a King's Bench suit brought by Margaret, widow of Viscount Lisle, in the summer of 1471. Margaret claimed that one of the two archers who shot her husband was John Body, described as a Bristol painter. The same man was exempted from a pardon granted to the town by Edward IV soon after Tewkesbury, and it is tempting to assume that the reason for this was his complicity in the death of Viscount Lisle.

While Nibley Green was being fought, Edward IV was pursuing Warwick and Clarence across the north Midlands. The earl and duke passed through Bristol in late March or early April 1470, still, according to Ricart, with five thousand men, and left their artillery there before embarking at Exeter for exile in France. They may have hoped to join forces with the Courtenays in Devon, and while Bristol is a natural stopping place on the route there from the west Midlands, it may also have been expected to provide a friendly refuge.<sup>93</sup>

## The Readeption, 1470-1471

Remarkably, Warwick reached an agreement with his old enemy Margaret, who was in exile in France, and he and Clarence returned to England with French backing in September 1470. Within a month they had forced Edward into exile in Burgundy, removed Henry VI from the Tower and set him on the throne. In March 1471, with Burgundian support, Edward returned to England. Clarence, disappointed that the agreement with Margaret meant that he would not be king, made his peace with his royal brother. At Barnet on 14 April Edward defeated and killed Warwick. The same day, Margaret landed at Weymouth with her army, and marched north. At Tewkesbury on 4 May she too was defeated, and Edward was once again secure on his throne.

The eight hectic months of the Readeption seem to have passed relatively quietly in Bristol, except for the very last days, when the town found itself at the centre of the dramatic events of the Lancastrian regime's last gasp. On 1 May 1471 Margaret's army entered Bristol where, according to the Yorkist official history,

they were greatly refreshed and relieved, by such as were the King's rebels in that town, of money, men, and artillery; where through they took new courage, the Thursday after to take the field, and give the King battle ...<sup>94</sup>

The artillery may well have been that left by Warwick the previous year. Among those who marched with Margaret to defeat at Tewkesbury two days later was the recorder, Nicholas Hervey, who did not survive the battle; he probably lead the Bristol contingent.<sup>95</sup> Edward's retribution was swift but discriminating. While at Coventry on 12 May, eight days after Tewkesbury, he sent a privy seal letter to the town, announcing that, 'albeit that the inhabitants ... have not been of such demeaning of late in their duty and allegiance as they ought to have been towards us', since he had been satisfied that, 'the offences have not been committed by the generality of the Town, but only by certain persons of the same', he was inclined 'to treat such persons as humbly will sue to us, not by way of rigour but with reasonable moderation, punishing the principal stirrers of rebellion against us and not the generality'. He went on to require that his intentions be made known to the townspeople, who presumably were in a highly nervous state. Those 'principal stirrers' were named: as well as Hervey and John Body, Viscount Lisle's possible assassin, they were the prominent common councillors John Shipward senior, Robert Straunge, John Cogan, and William Spenser, together with William Hynde and John Sutton, a goldsmith. They were to be arrested

and their goods seized. In addition, the mayor was to forward the names of any others who had been disloyal, ‘Not failing so to do as you will eschew our grievous displeasure’.<sup>96</sup> The king clearly did not consider the entire political elite to have been at fault; or at least, not enough to warrant exemplary punishment. In any case, on 12 May, as Edward waited in Coventry for reinforcements to help him suppress continuing resistance in the north and south east, the immediate need was to pacify the town, not to risk further disorder through witch-hunts.<sup>97</sup>

Within a month of Edward’s letter, John Shipward was arrested and his goods confiscated. He was pardoned and freed from Bristol’s Newgate gaol in September, but two months later he, Spenser, Straunge, Cogan and Philip Mede, who was not named in Edward’s letter but may have been informed against subsequently, were bound in £100 to appear before the king and council. Evidently they were sufficiently persuasive in their own defence, since pardons duly followed: Mede’s was granted on 23 November; Spenser’s followed the next month, and Straunge and Cogan’s both came on 27 January, but Shipward had to wait until 1 November 1472 for his second pardon. Mede and Shipward’s case suggests a second wave of investigations, possibly triggered by information supplied after September 1471.<sup>98</sup> The mayor, sheriffs, burgesses and commonalty of Bristol received a pardon on 25 January 1472.<sup>99</sup> That this had to wait until eight months after Edward’s privy seal suggests that it was being withheld while investigations were pursued; and perhaps, making the townsfolk sweat a little had been Edward’s intention all along.

Some notion of what services those ‘principal stirrers’ may have rendered Warwick and Clarence may be gleaned from statements made in 1479.<sup>100</sup> In that year Thomas Norton accused the mayor, William Spenser, of treason.<sup>101</sup> The grounds of his appeal of treason are not recorded, but other accusations made in the course of the resultant investigation are more enlightening. The sheriff and bailiffs claimed that Norton had fallen out with his father-in-law, John Shipward, and that after Tewkesbury he had been commissioned by Edward to seize into the king’s hands Warwick’s Somerset lands.<sup>102</sup> By virtue of this commission, Norton was alleged to have ‘published and noised that he had authority of the king ... to smite off the head of the said John Shipward’.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, three prisoners in Newgate said that they had heard a fellow prisoner, John Wilkins, supposedly one of Norton’s followers, declare,

that the said William Spencer now Mayor was untrue to the King  
... And that the said Mayor had £400 of the goods of George late  
Duke of Clarence And £300 of the goods of Richard late Earl of  
Warwick.<sup>104</sup>

He was later alleged to have said that if he were able he would cause Spenser to appear before the council of the Prince of Wales. Given that this was dominated by the Woodvilles, such a prospect might have been thought extremely unpleasant for a former supporter of the Readeption.<sup>105</sup>

Norton, at least until 1479, was a trusted and loyal servant of the king. He had entered Edward's household in 1466, and may have shared his exile in 1470. On the day that he accused Spenser of treason he was accompanied by Walter Holder, Swancote's associate named in Warwick's commission of 1469; assuming that they were suspected of disloyalty to the earl's regime, then Norton's association with Holder in 1479 may be evidence of their continuing resentment against Readeption collaborators.<sup>106</sup> Norton was related twice over to John Shipward senior: the latter's son, also called John, was Norton's brother-in-law. This close family alliance may well have been shattered by Shipward and Norton's conflicting reactions to the events of 1469 to 1471; in contrast to Shipward, perhaps, for Norton there could be no compromise with traitors. Judging by the 1479 testimonies, Warwick may have entrusted his Somerset lands to Shipward, while Spenser had the keeping of some part of the earl's goods. Were these arrangements made in the Spring of 1470, as Warwick and Clarence passed through Bristol on their way to exile? The accusation that Spenser was withholding Clarence's goods may relate to this episode, or to attempts to conceal the duke's possessions after his execution the previous year. The timing of Norton's allegation, coming one year after Clarence's death, may be significant; with Spenser's patron dead, did Norton at last feel able to move against him?

Edward's letter of May 1471 stresses that he was moved to forgiveness by the intercession of none other than Clarence, whose recent turn of coat had made possible his brother's victory. The duke's patronage had come at a price. In June 1472 the common council resolved to recompense William Spenser for the five tuns of wine that he had provided, at a personal cost of £30, to be presented to Clarence by the previous mayor, Thomas Kempson, and sheriff John Shipward,

for his good and gracious lordship to be shown to the King ... for his good grace to be had to the said mayor, Sheriff and commonalty of Bristol for divers causes upon them by our said sovereign lord's highness and his council submitted.<sup>107</sup>

Marriage to Warwick's daughter Isabel had made Clarence heir to her Despenser properties, which included the EarlsCourt and Barton. After his father-in-law's death at Barnet on 14 April Clarence wasted no time

in asserting his rights, and courts were held and manors occupied in his name even before Tewkesbury.<sup>108</sup> Evidently with equal ease he slid into Warwick's role of 'good lord' to the town of Bristol.<sup>109</sup>

## Conclusion

Edward's second reign was free of serious challenges, and he died in his bed in 1483. His brother Richard's usurpation of that year provoked more political upheaval, culminating in the battle of Bosworth two years later, but these events, while usually regarded as the final phase of the Wars of the Roses, can be seen with equal validity as a separate episode, more of an internecine struggle within the House of York, followed by the seizure of the crown by a new dynasty, the Tudors, than a renewal of the threat from Lancaster. Bristol appears to have had relatively little involvement in the dramas of the 1480s. The town had not become less important in the interim - it was still England's third wealthiest and most populous urban community - with one exception, and that was with regard to its strategic position. In 1459 and 1460 Bristol's command of the sea routes to Ireland and of England's south-western approaches made it an essential link in the chain of communication between the Yorkist and Neville exiles. In 1469 and 1471, its proximity to major conflicts at Edgecote and Tewkesbury also thrust it into the spotlight. The events of Richard III's usurpation in 1483 were centred largely in and around London, although Bristol played some part in the so-called 'Buckingham's Rebellion' in October.<sup>110</sup> In 1485, while Henry Tudor landed in Pembrokeshire, his route of march took him north, and the decisive encounter took place in the East Midlands. In addition to Bristol's strategic situation, it was home to a group of Yorkist adherents before Edward's usurpation. Their size and influence can only be guessed at, but it was sufficient to negate whatever Lancastrian sympathies persisted there. While a few individuals had personal ties with York and Neville, the main determinant of the Bristol elite's political affiliations would seem to have been economic. Commercial realities, and the impact upon them of economic and foreign policy, were probably what most swayed the affections of the mercantile governing class. There were individuals - Fulford, Heysaunt and Yonge may perhaps be cited as examples - who were prepared to risk life and limb for the cause, but for most, it was probably calculation rather than conscience that determined which way to jump. In this, one is tempted to conclude that Bristolians were no different from most other people in fifteenth-century England or, at the risk of being thought overly cynical, in any other century and any other place.

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37. His relatives petitioned for permission to remove it in March 1463, since it ‘daily falls down among your people of your said city’: E28/89/29.
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60. Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 366-8.

61. M. Jurkowski, C.L. Smith & D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales, 1188-1688* (London, 1998), pp. 109-10.

62. *GRBB, Text (Part III)*, pp. 77-8.

63. C81/1377/18; *CPR, 1461-67*, p. 304; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 113; Scofield, *Edward IV*, 1, pp. 318-9.

64. E159/241, *directa*, m 14; E368/241, *preceptor*, mm 404-406.

65. *CPR, 1461-67*, p. 430; *CCR, 1461-68*, pp. 277, 415; *Rot Parl*, 5, p. 625a; C1/43/102-3; E13/151 m 49d-50.

66. Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 105; Gray, 'Table of enrolled customs accounts', p. 335, from 1614 cloths in 1463/4 to 2645 in 1464/5 (this includes alien exports).

67. Ross, *Edward IV*, pp 109-11, 124.

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69. Such as Sir Richard Choke, William Spenser, James Touker and John Pavy, with whom he was associated in a gift of all goods by William Beneshen, a Wiltshire esquire, in 1464; or William Joice, merchant of Bristol, who made a gift of all his goods to the earl, among others, in November 1467: C146/17; *CCR, 1461-68*, pp. 448-9.

70. In March 1469 John Compton, a Bristol vintner, was in Clarence's company victualling Ireland: *CPR, 1467-69*, p. 133.

71. *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, p. 44.

72. J.O. Halliwell (ed), *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, by John Warkworth, Camden Society (1839), p. 7.

73. J.H. Harvey (ed.), *William Worcestre: Itineraries* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1969), pp. 339-40.

74. See the family tree in H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses* (1998 edn, Stroud), p.136.

75. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 108, 162; *GRBB, Text (Part II)*, pp. 136.

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77. *CFR, 1471-1485*, no.4; E13 11 Edward IV, Hillary Term.

78. pp. 424, 535; J.C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament, 1439-1509: Biographies* (London, 1938), pp. 443-4; D. Thomas, 'The Herberts of Raglan as supporters of the House of York in the second half of the fifteenth century' (unpublished University of Wales MA thesis, 1967), pp. 234-7, 239-42, 244, identifies him as Pembroke's brother; *CFR, 1461-71*, p. 190.

79. Thomas, 'Herberts of Raglan', pp. 250-1; E159 Trinity 6 EIV rot 19; Hillary 9 EIV rot 27; E13 8 EIV Easter (Middlesex); *CFR, 1461-71*, pp. 178-80. Thomas Herbert the younger was also escheater in Gloucestershire in 1461-2 and 1468-9; *CFR, 1461-71*, pp. 49, 114, 132, 138, 222; Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, 135.

80. J. Reidy (ed), *Thomas Norton's Ordinal of Alchemy*, Early English Text Society, original series, 272 (1975), ll. 926-1012, pp. xxxvii-lii.

81. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, pp. 267-8.

82. J. Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV* (Sutton, Stroud, 2002), pp. 199-201.

83. *CPR, 1467-77*, p. 172; Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, p. 448.

84. *CFR, 1461-71*, p. 163; *CPR, 1467-77*, p. 166.

85. *CFR, 1461-71*, p. 182.

86. *CPR, 1461-67*, p.63; *Rot Parl*, vol. 5, p. 542a-b.

87. *CPR, 1461-67*, p. 452; *CPR, 1467-77*, p. 83.

88. *CCR, 1468-76*, p. 363.

89. *CPR, 1467-77*, pp.180, 206.

90. C67/44 m 1; *CPR, 1467-77*, p. 269.

91. E159/248; *CPR, 1467-77*, p. 363.

92. For this paragraph see Fleming & Wood, *Gloucestershire's Forgotten Battle*, pp. 62-3, 77, 90 and *passim*.

93. *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, p. 44; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, p. 286; M. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence, 1449-78* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Bangor, 1992), p. 59.

94. J. Bruce (ed.), *Historie of the Arrival of Edward IV in England and the Final Recouerye of his Kingdomes from Henry VI*, Camden Society, 1 (1838), p. 25.

95. *Warkworth Chronicle*, p. 7.

96. F.B. Bickley (ed.), *The L[ittle] R[ed] B[ook of] B[ristol]*, vol. 2 (Bristol, 1900), pp. 130-1.

97. Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 173.

98. *LRBB*, 2, 131-2; *CPR*, 1467-77, p. 274; *CCR*, 1468-76, n. 843; C67/48, mm 18, 20, 34; C67/49, m 3.
99. C67/48, m 18.
100. *GRBB*, *Text (Part IV)*, pp. 57-93.
101. For Norton, see above, n. 80.
102. Shipward's will, made in 1473, refers to his son-in-law but not in terms that would necessarily suggest a warm relationship: T.P. Wadley, *Notes or Abstracts of the Wills contained in ... the Great Orphans' Book and Book of Wills* (Bristol, 1886), pp. 160-1.
103. *GRBB*, *Text (Part IV)*, p. 70.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 82. For the council, and its supervisory authority over Gloucestershire, see Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 196-8.
106. Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy*, pp. 201, 288; *GRBB*, *Text (Part IV)*, p. 58.
107. *GRBB*, *Text (Part III)*, p. 95. Shipward was the son of John Shipward senior; he replaced Henry Chestre, who had died in office, in February 1471: *CFR*, 1461-71, p. 294.
108. Hicks, 'Career of George Plantagenet, duke of Clarence', pp. 310-15.
109. Hervey's replacement as Bristol's recorder was John Twynyho, a lawyer retained by Clarence; he was recorder by November 1472: *CCR*, 68-76, no. 963.
110. John Kymer, a Bristol customs official, was a 'Buckingham' rebel, later rewarded by Henry VII: L. Gill, *Richard III and Buckingham's Rebellion* (Stroud, 1999), p. 85.

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